DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 401 416 CE 072 907

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TITLE Senior Citizen Education in Korea: Current Status and Demands.
PUB DATE May 96
NOTE 12p.; In: Constitutive Interplay midst Discourse of East and West: Modernity & Postmodernity Renderings in Adult & Continuing Education; see CE 072 896.
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adult Education; *Educational Needs; Foreign Countries; Needs Assessment; *Older Adults; Program Content; Program Development
IDENTIFIERS *South Korea

ABSTRACT

The education of senior citizens in South Korea should center on educational programs that develop their consciousness and help them to reestablish their status and role in the family and society. In Korea, any individual or group interested in senior education can initiate programs regardless of place and equipment. They can set the policy and choose learning materials, instructors, and establish the time schedule. According to a 1996 report, the total number of senior citizen schools is 426, and the number of students is 41,151. Purposes and content of senior citizen schools vary according to the backgrounds of the groups involved. They may focus on the issue of the marginalization of aged persons, or they may aim to enhance respect for aged persons as well as the propagation of their religious values. Content may include the following: community activities, domestic and international issues, government activities, guidance of youth, liberal education, health management, recreation, and religious learning. Tasks of senior citizen education in Korea can be divided into two areas: social welfare and individual development. Future directions and tasks of senior citizen education are as follows: redirect its purposes, base content and process on solid research findings, expand financial resources, develop programs to meet needs and interests, and focus on preparation for and enjoyment of later life. (Contains 10 references.) (YLB)

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International Adult & Continuing Education Conference (IACEC)
27-28 May 1996

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SENIOR CITIZEN EDUCATION IN KOREA: CURRENT STATUS AND DEMANDS

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I. Introduction

In recent times, senior citizen-related problems have been recognised as important social issues in Korean society. The combined effects of an aging population, industrialization and urbanization have brought about a remarkable change in the life style, status, and role of senior citizens. In the traditional extended family, aged people held a symbolic position that guaranteed them respect and authority. However, with the emergence of the nuclear family in modern times, these values have been eroded as the focus shifted to the values of the younger and middle-aged generation. As society increasingly emphasized the importance of economic efficiency and utility-based production, so there was a corresponding decline in the social status and role of aged people. Once retired, there was a feeling of isolation and marginalization among many senior citizens.

In traditional Korean society, family loyalties took precedence over individual aspirations and desires. The ethic of 'filial piety' was the foundation of family life whereby aged people received a good life, authority and fame. The concept of 'filial piety' is rooted in the Confucian tradition. It has a spiritual meaning which conveys authority, respect, and status for aged people. Therefore, most aged people secured respect and financial and emotional security, were in charge of number of ceremonies in the family, and maintained their position as the most important person in the family until their death. 'Filial piety' has been an important ethic for all Korean children and parents in fulfilling their social obligations and responsibilities.

Along with rapid industrialization came an increasing emphasis upon individualism and independence as universal values in Korean society. These values are the opposite to Korean familism and bring forth immense changes in the character of the traditional Korean family. In traditional Korean society, the dependence of aged people on their children was considered as a right. Nowadays, they perceive themselves to be both a physical and psychological burden upon their children. As a result of these changes, many Korean senior citizens feel increasingly alienated.

While familism remains a dominant force in Korean society, the structure and role of family members has greatly changed. Younger family members are now busy pursuing their own life and as a result, have little time for family talks and family contact.. As families spend less time

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doing family activities, the aged spend more of their time watching television or playing with similar aged persons.

The co-existence of familism and individualism is a uniquely Korean phenomenon. The basic task for resolving the issues related to senior citizens has very much to do with the compromise and the combination between familism and individualism. Problems arising from active life styles, role crises, conflicts with daughter-in-laws and grandchildren should be overcome by creating a new culture which acknowledges such influences.

Korean aged people have a distinctive historical background. Most of them were the victims of Japanese colonization which only allowed them an elementary level of education. Even after the liberation they suffered from the Korean War and the subsequent ideological conflict between North Korea and South Korea. They may well be the last generation to experience the values of familism as we know it.

Because aged people no longer have the same authority, and status in family life they are slowly becoming more independent and less dependent upon their children for support. The recent increase in single families of aged persons reflects this change. In 1990, it was up to 27.4% and it is expected to increase to 35.0% by the year 2000 and 60% in 2020. The phenomena of single families among aged people might be related to young people preferring their own life styles but also to the increased tendency for aged people desiring to live by themselves. Especially, aged persons who have attained relative financial independence and a high educational level, tend to believe that it is more comfortable and a better quality of life if they live by themselves rather than living with their children.

In short, the population increase of aged people, owing to the advancement of economics and medical technology and the corresponding increase in single families of aged people, coupled with the increasing trend for young people to neglect their parents, has engendered the changes of consciousness about later life.

The changes in family values create a lot of difficulties in many ways. For example, as more middle-aged people take on the job of decision makers in family and financial management, aged people no longer receive the same respect and authority that they once had. This has impacted negatively in terms of sustaining traditional familism. Hence, many aged persons are having psychological difficulties and conflicts.

Research on the life style and consciousness of senior citizens shows that they suffer from health problems, the loss of role taking, financial difficulties, psychological loneliness, and alienation. Korean aged people are very worried about financial difficulties and health problems, lack of opportunity for social participation, and insecurity in later life.

Another urgent issue for many Korean senior citizens is connected to the value conflicts with young people. This has much to do with the generation gap and the cultural lag between the two generations. This breeds a great deal of psychological tension and conflict.

Considering these changes, the task and direction of senior citizen education in Korea should centre on educational programs which develop their consciousness and assist them to re-establish their status and role in the family and society.

II. The Current Status of Senior Citizen Education in Korea

1. Varieties of Senior Citizen Education Programs

It is not an easy matter to assess the current status if Korean senior education programs as there is much freedom and flexibility in initiating them. Any individual or group interested in senior education can, with or without formal screening of law or procedure, initiate programs regardless of place and equipment, set the policy, choose learning materials, instructors and time schedule.

According to a 1996 report of the Division of Welfare of Senior Citizens, Department of Social Welfare Policy, Ministry of Health and Welfare, the total number of senior citizen schools is 426 and the number of students is 41,151. Most students are required to be over 60 years of age, living in the same community. Senior citizen schools are non-regular schools, with varying programs related to the welfare and leisure of aged persons. These schools have various names such as Senior Citizen Schools, Schools for Aged Persons, or Universities for Senior Citizens. The 1996 report on Senior Citizen Schools by the Department of Health and Welfare shows the location and number of senior citizen schools in Korea:

Table 1[1]
The Current Status of Senior Citizen Schools

City and Province	The Number of Institutions Senior	Citizen Schools The Number of Senior Citizens
Seoul	99	7,605
Pusan	68	7,665
Daegu	15	2,060
Inchon	8	918
Kwangju	6	524
Taejon	10	866
Kyunggido	53	4,701
Kangwondo	17	3,344
Chungbuk	19	1,253
Chungnam	15	1,043
Chunbuk	6	603
Chunnam	25	2,023

[1] Geun, Young Jun (1993), "A study on the status of senior citizen schools," M.Ed. thesis, Chung-ang University.

Kyungbuk	29	3,731
Kyungnam	41	3,652
Jaeju	15	1,163

Recently, churches and temples have started to establish senior citizen schools and their involvement has contributed to the rapid expansion of the system. Korean senior citizen schools appear to have similar characteristics but when carefully considered,groups with very different backgrounds have different policies for running the schools. The following categories reflect such different backgrounds of the groups:

1. Senior citizen schools by senior citizen groups. Run by the Korean Association of Adult Education, the Korean Association for Senior Citizens, and the Red Cross Association for Serving Senior Citizens.
2. Senior citizen schools by social service groups. Run by Youth Centers, the Korean Women's Welfare Society, YMCA, YWCA, Saemaul service groups.
3. Senior citizen schools by religious groups. Run by Buddhist, Protestant, and Roman Catholic groups.

2. Purposes of Senior Citizen Schools

The following summary identifies the major purposes of senior citizen schools. The purposes will vary according to the different backgrounds of the groups involved.

1. Senior citizen schools aim to expand the groups involved in the operation of the school and cultivate cultural capabilities of their members .

According to the mission statement of the senior citizen schools run by the Korea Association for Senior Citizens, the largest group of aged people having 250 schools in Korea, senior citizen education schools aim resolve conflict arising from the competing values of East and West, Old and Young, re-develop the potential of aged people with the attainment of appropriate perspectives in our time, help them create a new life by offering knowledge about health management.

The schools founded in 1983 by the Red Cross Service Association for Senior Citizens, one of the most well-known schools, are directed to help aged persons, advance health, to guide them to help each other and feel the joys of sharing through recultivating the virtues of generosity and modesty rooted in human respect, help them develop perspectives which involve understanding the tasks and changes of current time, hence, overcoming prejudice and preconception to help them realize that senior citizens have enriching histories and traditions and wisdom for the subsequent generations. Futhermore, the schools should continue to help aged persons consolidate what they have learned in everyday life.

As shown above, the senior citizen schools run by the groups of senior citizens develop individual or group-oriented objectives. These objectives are mainly the achievement of social

adjustment and human respect for development of potential and re-validation of the authority and roles of senior citizen in family and society.

2. Senior citizen schools, by social service groups are focused not only on the issues of social adjustment of aged persons but also on the issue of marginalization of aged persons. Some of the schools have goals often enhancing respect and 'filial piety' toward aged peoples.

The schools that are run by women or youths groups attempt to comfort the \alienated aged persons by emphasizing the respect of the young and adults for aged persons. The Pusan Sewha Senior Citizen School, for example, describes its objectives as follows:

The main purpose of our school is to comfort the lonely and alienated aged persons and help them to live more actively and meaningfully. Even though the importance of this matter is not recognized in society, we hope our work will regain our traditional spirit of filial respect.

Another example is Susan University for Senior Citizens, founded in 1983 with the purpose of providing social service. It has the following objective:

> This school aim to improve the capabilities for social adjustment and role taking in society; to gain skills for health maintenance to guide and recognize the importance of sustaining and transmitting tradition; to recultivate the potentialities of aged persons by having classes of developing cultural abilities and specialities. It aims to help the aged persons to pursue a happy and comfortable life, overcoming loneliness and alienation.

3. Religion-based senior citizen schools have the objective of enhancing respect aged persons as well as the propagation of their religious values. Most religious schools are Christian. There are some Buddhist and Catholic schools as well.

Chung-nung Senior Citizen School, founded in 1975, seeks has the following objectives:

> Based on Christianity, this school to help aged persons in social adjustment and the alleviation of loneliness and alienation. We also try to help aged persons to better understand younger generations with the perspective of lifelong education. Finally, we hope to facilitate aged persons to develop their own view concerning senior citizens and guide them to make more friends and have a more hopeful and joyful life.

As illustrated in the above purposes, these schools put efforts into lifelong education but neglect the issues of health, role-making, and alienation.

3. The Curriculum and the Learners needs

There has been much research on the subjects of selecting contents and methods but

insufficient efforts have been made for program development and effective management. Programs are difficult to follow as planned owing to the problems of selecting instructors and implementing.

We can analyse some characteristics of the content of the various schools in the following way.

* Senior Citizen leading Schools by Senior Citizen Groups

Some schools have a pre-planned curriculum. Korea Association for Senior Citizens, considered the senior citizen group, sets the following. The subject areas: classes for senior citizens, community activities of senior citizens, domestic and international issues and government activities, guidance of youths and enhancement filial piety.

The curriculum consists of 20% liberal education, 40% national policy issues, 20% skills development, 20% health management. An example of the South Seoul Senior Citizen School's curriculum is as follows:

The role and task of senior citizens;
Senior citizens and the community;
Basic knowledge concerning the illness of aged persons;
Understanding the reality of North Korea;
Our history;
Later life in Western society;
Health management of aged persons;
Money management of aged persons;
Maintenance of health;
Traditional culture and respectable ways of living;
The relationship between grandparents and grandchildren;
Leisure for senior citizens and;
Social service activities.

This school has based the above curriculum on 50 hours for a year. Another 50 hours spent on music, dance, and recreation. In addition to the 100 hours class time, they often travel, visit broadcasting institutions, and hold song contests.

The school run by the Red Cross Service Association for Senior Citizens consists of 13 curriculum topics such as liberal education, health, the ideas of Red Cross, religion, home economics, geography, history, current issues, classical literature, Korean literature, physical training, music, and entertainment. Each of these 13 topic consumes 2 hours. Sometimes, a certain aged person amongst learners will be chosen as an instructor. When inviting external instructors, they tend to invite doctors, professors, well-known persons, or priests.

This school, at the beginning of the year, collects curriculum material and learning resources through person-to-person consultation with the learners. The collected material used in

the selection and organization of the contents. Therefore, the school can be considered to reflect the learners' point of view and needs.

I would like to introduces the Seoul Senior Citizen School as an example. This school has a one-hour class everyday. Another hour is assigned to extra-curricular activities according to the interests of the learners.

The extra-curricular activities consist of singing class, traditional music class, musical instrument class, traditional folk song class, physical education class, etc. Each club has its own instructor and helps develop creativity. As shown above, most of the curriculum is focused on hobby oriented activities. Only some of the programs deal with the issues related to the consciousness of aged persons. The basic role of senior citizen schools is to facilitate social participation and activities through activities and programs related to hobbies, health, and other daily activities. These schools are considered to be leisure schools.

* Senior Citizen Schools Organised by Social Service Groups

A class for mothers, run by the Centre for Law and Women, comprising learners of the age of 60 or more, has the following curriculum:

The need of lifelong education and its practice
Keeping good health
Pollution in food
Democratization of family
The perspective of mother-in-law in the conflicts with daughter-in-law
The perspective of daughter-in-law in the conflicts with mother-in-law
Problems related to the marriage of children;
Understanding youths;
Wisdom of living together;
Trends of the world;
Consumer education; and
Law and semior citizens.

* Religion Based Senior Citizen Schools.

The Chung-nung School for Senior Citizens, rooted in Christianity, has a curriculum of geography, history, law, economics, morality, ethics, religion, medicine, health, home economics, psychology, common sense. They have formal classes every Saturday between 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. The second hour is for music and dancing. However, the learners have to come to school at 11:00 a.m. and attend a worship service for an hour. Generally, the main focus of the curriculum is to foster Christianity and cultivate liberality. Therefore, they deal with the topic related to Christian life and wisdom of daily life.

Most students of the Chung-nung Senior Citizen School are Buddhists. The school requires all students to attend Buddhist classes. The curriculum is as follows:

Ways to have long life;
The words and actions of Buddha;
Health management;
The relationship between daughter-in-law and mother-in-law;
Senior citizens' life in foreign countries;
Buddhism in South and East Asian countries;
The relationship between the grandparents and grandchildren;
Senior citizens' money management;
Home ceremonies;
Music and entertainment; and
Travelling.

Paoro Senior Citizen School, run by the Catholics, has classes every Friday between 2:00-4:00 p.m. The characteristic of this school is that major contents of the regular classes consist of women's interests.

According to an needs analysis, most common needs of students are health related. Other popular needs are family life education, hobby life education, basic education, citizenship education, skills education. According to this analysis, while male senior citizens tend to prefer hobby oriented classes, female learners were generally interested in family life. In other studies, senior citizen needs are related to the issues of aged people, the appropriate attitude of an eldest in the family, and morality and ethics. However, only a small number of schools address these issues.

Failure to fully address the needs of learners is due to the fact that little research is available on what the learners actually desire to learn. Moreover, not many instructors are available for teaching about the issues relating to later life. Even when capable instructors are available, the schools often cannot afford to pay the instructors. The major purposes and contents of Korean Senior Citizen Schools are the expansion of the membership of their own groups, individual development, and transformation of consciousness. But in real practice, the contents are centered around hobbies. Only some schools are offering programs in consciousness transformation.

In schools organised by social service groups, the main purpose of the curriculum is to enhance respect and filial piety. Actual classes, however, emphasize role taking in family and the wisdom of living together.

Senior citizen schools run by religious groups are centered around religious learning, common sense, and liberal education.

III. Tasks and Demands of Senior Citizen Education

The increasing demands for senior citizen education in Korea are not merely a matter of a social campaign advocating respect for the elders. It has the task of settling the problems related to aged people. In our aging society, senior citizens' social adjustment comes to be considered a

search for congruous social development. Accordingly, the educational task should be developing social roles and exploring new values for later life.

Senior citizen education programs should contain practical contents related to the issues of social adjustment and appropriate development tasks of senior citizens. Firstly, the contents should include understanding the generation gap and social changes, learning to manage later life after retirement, raising awareness of the current politics, economics, society and culture, and attaining extensive knowledge concerning health advancement.

Secondly, the curriculum should address emotional development. For this, it should include material for active work and living, skills necessary for an enjoyable leisure, adjustment after a spouse's death, getting ready to face death.

Thirdly, curricular contents should also embrace social role taking, learning through making and keeping friends, yielding responsibility in family and society to the next generation, taking responsibility as an elder in the family and workplace, and learning how to maintain a good relationship with children and grandchildren.

Fourthly, the curriculum should encompass physical aspects such as adjustment to bodily changes, regular exercises, foods appropriate for health management, and preparation for illness and weakness.

The tasks of senior citizen education can be divided into two areas: a social welfare aspect and an individual development aspect.

* Social Welfare Aspect

In order to solve the problems relating to aged people, the establishment of a national social policy is necessary. The Department of Health and Welfare's budget for senior citizens in accounts for only 10% of the total budget. Senior citizens receive little support.

Senior citizens' problems come mainly from the loss of roles in family and society and the depletion of economic and financial resources. Therefore, retirement should be postponed to later ages or we should consider ways to provide after-retirement jobs for senior citizens. Korea Gallup Research reports that 30.9% of the senior citizens of 60 years or more of age are employed in one way or another. Among them, 77.2% wish to continue to work. Among those who are not employed, 41.1% hope to work.

These findings suggest that only a national policy can address senior citizen's problems. The state has the responsibility to eradicate poverty and hunger. The state ought to safeguard the right to work for the senior citizens who hope to work, thereby giving social roles.

However, we cannot expect the solution of the problems of senior citizens if the government has limited budgetary resources to assist us with. Given that such resources are limited, we should look for other resources from community groups, religious groups, social

groups, and individuals. Above all, prejudices against senior citizens have to be eliminated, for instance, the prejudice that all aged persons are feeble, unconstructive, and therefore, of no use. The personality of senior citizens vary according to their educational level, career, income and gender.

The future direction of senior citizens education from the standpoint of social welfare should be to develop programs which offer social services to senior citizens.

* Individual Development Aspect

In substantiating the status and roles of senior citizens, by means of social policy, senior citizens themselves need to develop positive views about themselves and their abilities. Even after retirement, senior citizens should be able to find their social roles and create a satisfying life. This gives senior citizens confidence and competence necessary for participating social life.

Besides, more programs should be developed and implemented in order to help make later life meaningful and fruitful. About 70% of aged persons over 65 years of age have little formal education. Even those with some education were not prepared for covering with the problems arising from their present social life. They needed to have functional literacy and numeracy, as well as job oriented education.

Current programs for senior citizen education, deal only with such concerns as singing, traditional dance, and recreation. This tendency needs to be corrected for the purpose of facilitating an enduring development of senior citizens.

Senior citizens education ought to be directed toward the development of new attitudes, values, knowledge and skills which are required as industrialization, value conflicts and human alienation become the major concerns of our modern society. Such learning must contribute to creating a new meaningful life.

IV. Future directions and tasks of Senior Citizen Education

I would like to conclude by suggesting some future directions and tasks of senior citizen education:

First, we need to redirect and reconstruct the ideas, purposes and perspectives of senior citizens education. With a new perspective, and through the cooperation of government and senior citizen groups, we can redirect senior citizens education not only to more institutionalize and legalize programs but also to reconstruct their ideas and purpose.

Second, selection of contents and processes should be based on solid research findings. The current programs in senior citizen schools tend to be based on convenience rather than the stated objectives. This tendency makes it hard to develop rational and adequate programs.

Third, financial resources need to be expanded. The current senior citizens education programs receive no external funding. Therefore, the state as well as local governments should commit more funds to senior citizens education.

Fourth, it is necessary to develop programs to meet the needs and interests of senior citizens. Senior citizens education ought not only to enhance students' knowledge and skills but also to buttress their effort to satisfy their needs and interests.

Fifth, senior citizens education must be focused on preparation for and enjoying later life. The contents of such an education should include social adjustment, fulfillment of needs, and development of a plan for later life.

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